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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

United States of America: draft resolution

Modalities for documentation

The General Assembly,

Having considered the information presented by the representative of the Secretary-General to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in October 1995 on the costs and waste associated with the increasing volume of documentation,

Recognizing that members of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies contribute directly to this volume of documentation through their requests for reports and that they can reduce the costs and waste associated with the production of United Nations documents through increased restraint in making such requests,

Noting that action taken in 1994 by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees introducing more efficient reporting methods and procedures of the type called for in the present resolution resulted in a 30 per cent decrease in paper work for its 1995 session, producing an estimated annual savings of 264,000 United States dollars,

Noting also that actions taken by the Committee on Conferences, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the First Committee of the General Assembly have resulted in lower documentation costs,

1. Decides:

(a) That documents originating in the Secretariat for submission to the General Assembly or its subsidiary bodies should not exceed sixteen pages in length, except when the Secretary-General certifies that a document represents a special case, such as reports dealing with human rights violations and others

warranting reporting at greater length, or a non-recurrent comprehensive report on an issue not routinely addressed, and that the production of addenda to documents should be strictly limited to that which is requested in the legislative mandate;

(b) That documents originating in functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies should not exceed twenty-four pages in length;

(c) That reports should not include descriptions of the history of the subject that are contained in other documents, but rather make reference to those other documents, and should not, in general, include a narrative of substantive discussions;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that documentation is available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents, in each of the six official languages of the United Nations;

3. Requests the President of the General Assembly:

(a) To ask all Chairmen of the Main Committees of the Assembly to encourage all members to exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports and to consider biennializing or triennializing resolutions that require production of reports;

(b) To encourage all Main Committees to become aware of changes instituted recently by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Committee on Contributions and the First Committee of the General Assembly with regard to reducing documentation costs;

4. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To present oral, rather than written, reports where appropriate, in particular in the case of progress reports;

(b) To submit consolidated reports on related topics under a single item or sub-item;

(c) To provide an oral estimate of the cost of any document or report requested by Member States when an intergovernmental body adopts a resolution containing such a request;

5. Also requests the Secretary-General to take steps to promote expanded use by Member States of optical disk equipment in order to reduce copying and distribution costs;

6. Endorses the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Joint Inspection Unit conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the publications activity of agencies of the United

Nations system, including, inter alia, an analysis of the extent to which publications are used by Member States and the cost effectiveness with which publications are produced;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to present to it at its fifty-first session an oral report on the cost savings resulting from these measures.